

Nonprofit News

Six Principles to Envision Social Changes

The following article based on *The Pollyanna Principles* by Hildy Gottlieb was published at Global Village Academy, gvillage.org

"When we assume we are separate, we build systems that reinforce that separateness. When we assume we are interconnected and interdependent, we build systems that reinforce those connections."

Hildy Gottlieb's book "The Pollyanna Principles" is a handbook for starting a revolution in social benefit organization design and practice, but it isn't *the* revolution. What's the catch? Well, it is going to take everyone, whether you are part of an organization or receive services from one, whether you are a philanthropist or a volunteer, whether you work for a for-profit business or are a community member. For social benefit organizations to truly "work" we all need to be part of the design, the process, the success. There are six core statements that represent The Pollyanna Principles and they include:

1. We accomplish what we hold ourselves accountable for. There are four basic functions of a board that relate to its ultimate accountability: leadership (the "ends"), legal oversight, operational oversight, and board mechanics (the "means"). Boards generally regard their accountability in a way completely asymmetrical in emphasis on the "means". A by-product of a "means" emphasis on "keeping the organization out of trouble" (legal and operational oversight) is a fear-based risk management system; as a result, the actual vision of the organization remains unfulfilled.

2. Each and every one of us is creating the future, everyday, whether we do so consciously or not.

Community benefit organizations aim to solve problems; however, the 'problems' that many organizations attempt to fix are often symptoms of a larger problem that have been misdiagnosed as individual maladies. The vast majority of contemporary efforts to create better communities myopically focuses on the "problems of today" and ignore the future that is shaped with every decision. Focusing on the future allows for a greater context by which to measure "success"; it allows an organization to focus on the contemporary situation and what lies beyond it.

3. Everyone and everything is interconnected and interdependent, whether we acknowledge that or not.

The assumptions the sector currently holds about interdependence are actually quite the opposite: competition and independence are the keys to success. Most grant processes, even the ones designed to encourage "collaboration" within the sector, are competitive by nature and resource centers ground their educational approaches in the "dog-eat-dog" mentality. If this competitive mindset were working, we would see amazing communities and amazing results from organizational efforts to improve them, but we do not.

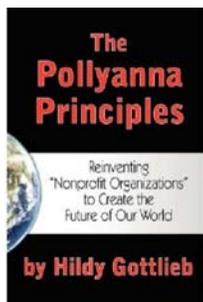
4. Being the change we want to see means walking the talk of our values.

The inclination to rationalize often allows an organization to unwittingly stray from its mission or even behave completely opposite from their ideology. 'Walking the talk' is at the root of the word 'integrity', however few organizations

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936 Easton Rd.
PO Box 754
Warrington, PA
18976
&
163 S. Broad St.
Lansdale, PA 19446
215-343-2727
www.catalystnonprofit.com

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implement systems to ensure their values are upheld. 'Walking the talk' requires that systems are in place so that decisions that may lead to rationalization are solved before they even arise, even while survival-driven concerns can complicate even the simplest choices.

5. Strength builds upon our strengths, not our weaknesses. Community strength is built on the strength of the organizations that serve it, however most of the work being done by community benefit organizations is being done with an attitude of scarcity and weakness. This scarcity assumption yields a focus on what will bring in money and what aspects of the organization are in a crisis state. When the scarcity assumption is replaced with an assumption of strength, the whole world changes: 'can't' becomes 'possibility'."

6. Individuals will go where systems lead them. None of the standard systems used by this sector – planning, governance, development etc. - are aimed at potential. These systems primarily focus on reactive or incremental change vs. creating a proactive, extraordinary future for our communities. Individuals and groups will go where the systems point them. What is needed are systems that set high expectations and inspire decisions that aim towards those expectations."

The first step is to admit that we have a problem. Next we need to start driving our work with our vision of how we want the world to be, instead of what the problems are before us. What does that mean? Well, imagine that your organization said you wanted to have a public education system in your province that provided opportunities for all students to learn, fair pay for both teachers and staff, opportunities for growth for students, teachers and staff, and an entry point for all students to enter the "real world" prepared. You can imagine that by operating under that vision (instead of focusing on drop-out rates, teacher pay scales, or job skill training) that partnerships with the community, new opportunities for learning exchanges and career paths, and much more start to take shape organically, naturally.

Join us on September 19th as esteemed presenter Michael Kumer of Boards MTO teaches us how to create a transformational future for our community using the Pollyanna Principles.



Thanks to the generosity of MileStone Bank, registration fees for the Fall seminars are waived.

To Register:
visit the
Training and Events
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October and November
seminar location:
PA Center for
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3805 Old Easton Rd.
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2012 Catalyst Center's Nonprofit Management Training series

September 19th 4:00-6:00pm **Pollyanna Principles: A New and Revolutionary Way Nonprofits Can Change the World**

Michael Kumer, Boards MTO

The Pollyanna Principles created by Hildy Gottlieb, is considered by many to be the single most important contribution to the nonprofit sector in many, many years. During this workshop we will learn how The Pollyanna Principles can help you create a transformational future for your organization and your community.

This seminar will be followed by a networking reception until 7pm at Aldie Mansion

October 23rd 8:30-12:00 **Communication & Community Impact: Critical Components in the Funding Relationship**

Dawn Prall George, CopperBeech Consulting

The relationship an organization has with a funder is a 2 way relationship that is critical to success. Now more than ever, effectively communicating the impact your organization is having on its constituents and within the community can mean the difference between a grant proposal that is funded or one that is denied. Learn from Dawn Prall George, principal, CopperBeech Consulting, effective and proven strategies and methods that can improve and strengthen the relationship.

November 13th 8:30-12:00 **Time Management, The Art of Getting Things Done**
Michelle Landis, Action Coach

The effective achievement of goals relies specifically on how you manage your time. Join Master Business Coach Michelle Landis from ActionCOACH as she helps you uncover the secrets of time management in a way that will deliver focus, accountability and results.

Which CMS is Best for a Nonprofit Website?

by Tom Allebach

There can be considerable debate on what type of CMS (Content Management System) is best suited for a nonprofit organization's website. Some people are drawn to custom platforms, while others prefer an out of the box solution. Depending upon the organization, technology projects may not be one of their strong suits, which can add a degree of uncertainty. And when we consider that there are hundreds of CMS platforms available, website projects can be very slow in getting started.

For those unfamiliar with the term, a web-based content management system or CMS is "a bundled or stand-alone application used to create, manage, store, and deploy content on Web pages" (source www.Wikipedia.org). The CMS is the platform on which the website is built, and just as importantly is the tool the organization uses to update content on their site. That content could range from simple text and images to videos or any other media used to promote the agency.

While there are many variations of CMS platforms available, they can be readily be split into two major categories: proprietary and public. The proprietary systems are those developed by individual web development companies, and are only available to their customers. Public or open source platforms are those developed by a user community and are available for anyone to use. Although both CMS platforms fulfill the same purpose, there are distinct attributes associated with each one.

Proprietary CMS

Prior to open source systems being developed, a number of web development firms created their own CMS platforms. These platforms grew out of the need to address specific client issues, and over time were enhanced to meet broader business requirements. If a nonprofit considers working with a company that has a proprietary CMS, it will add another layer of investigation to their process. Because each custom CMS has its own peculiarities, the nonprofit will need to determine if it has all the capabilities they need. Some of the issues to consider when investigating a proprietary CMS include:

Ease of use – This can be one of the most significant factors to consider. The intent of the CMS is to allow nontechnical users to update content. If the CMS is not transparent and easy to use, you will lose one of the primary benefits of the system. Before going forward with a proprietary CMS provider, make sure you have an in-depth look at their system.

Updates – Ask the provider how updates to the CMS are administered and how simple it is to migrate from one version to another. Improvements are normally made on an ongoing basis, and it's important to understand how that will impact your site.

Functionality – Learning about all the features of the CMS can be difficult. Often, nonprofits will not have a clear idea on what all to look for. To find out what is available, ask to speak with a few existing clients to learn about their experience. In particular, ask what capabilities the system does not have and how that has affected their organization.

Service – Learn what all is included and not included in their offering. Ask specifically what is included in support and what is billed by the hour.

Open Source CMS

Open source platforms began to emerge in the late 1990's, and except for the most complicated websites, have displaced proprietary systems. There are far too many CMS platforms to list here, but a few have emerged as the most widely deployed.

WordPress: The first official version of WordPress was released in January, 2004, and has proven to be the most popular. Known initially as a blogging tool, the WordPress community has grown and a large number of developers have been creating add-ons, called widgets, to enhance its web capabilities.



Tom Allebach is Vice President of Business Development for Sitecats Web Development.

Prior to joining Sitecats, Tom spent 10 years as the Executive Director of a local nonprofit organization. You can reach him at Tom@Sitecats.com or 215-345-9050

Joomla: Joomla, the second most popular open CMS, became available in September, 2005, and has proven to have stronger and deeper functionality. A broad array of add-ons, referred to as extensions, is also available.

These two systems are by far the most prevalent, and their ease of use has been the driver in boosting their popularity.

Drupal: Another common CMS is Drupal, which began along the open source path in January, 2001. Drupal tends to be more complex, and is perceived to be slower than both WordPress and Joomla.

Some of the other open source platforms include DotNetNuke, Melody, dotCMS, Typo3 and Umbraco.

Some considerations when thinking about using an open source platform:

Broad user community – User groups and independent contributors help bring credibility and ease of use to open source CMS. With a diverse community there is a greater chance that your organizational needs will be addressed.

Add-ons - Developers are continually creating add-ons and components (donations capabilities, volunteer engagement, mobile access, calendar extensions, etc.) that can enhance your site.

More resources – With more users of these open systems, there is the potential of finding outside help that can assist you in implementation and maintenance.

Ease of migration – If your current web developer doesn't work out or goes out of business, you can readily find another provider to support your site.

As with any technology project, there is can be a sense of venturing off into the unknown. Being aware of the different options on CMS platforms and the attributes of each one, should give you a better chance for making your website project a success.

You can reach Tom Allebach at Tom@Sitecats.com or 215-345-9050.

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Catalyst Center for Nonprofit
Management
PO Box 754
Warrington, PA 18976

